CATALOG DESIGN HANDBOOK
design catalogs that sell, for email & print

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Marketing

http://prodalist.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Catalogs do much more than promote products and solicit purchases. From luxury goods to practical necessities, products come to life on catalog pages that present features, functions, and benefits to target audiences.

In the early days of modern merchandising, doorstop-sized catalogs from big retailers such as Sears and Montgomery Ward delivered the promise of collections of goods to far-flung customers who otherwise would have been unable to envision, let alone obtain, the items on their pages. The arrival of a new catalog edition created an occasion for excitement over the prospect of discovering new products, daydreaming over expensive goods, and planning how to improve life with new ideas and options.

Some catalogs show examples of how products elevate and improve life, creating a vision of ease and enjoyment that customers can attain with a simple purchase. Other catalogs enumerate features in brief bullet-point form, stepping up product capabilities from entry-level through deluxe models to convey the incremental functionality and value of higher-end merchandise.

Catalogs work best when they reflect a deliberate philosophy, a specific way of communicating with customers that shows how products will make a difference in real lives. Otherwise, catalogs become nothing more than random, haphazard collections of merchandise with no unifying thought to pull them together.

YOUR CATALOG DEVELOPMENT

When you're planning a catalog for your business, you face a range of strategic choices designed to determine everything from the catalog's philosophy to its appearance. These pages outline some of the decisions that will affect the kinds of information your catalog includes, what your catalog does in establishing a connection with customers and prospects, and how well your catalog accomplishes its mission of increasing your revenue stream.

1. STYLES AND TYPES OF CATALOGS

Catalogs differ from leaflets and brochures in several important functional and philosophical ways. First, pamphlet-style literature typically is designed to use a constrained space to convey a moderate amount of information about one product or a superficial level of detail about several related products. Because they contain more pages than simple single-sheet brochures, catalogs can give a well-rounded picture of individual products and excel at presenting entire product lines.

Second, customers are less likely to retain brochures than they are to keep a catalog on a shelf or in a drawer. The substantial nature of a catalog, its heft in the hand and its ability to engage the reader in extended contemplation, elevates it to become a resource rather than simply a piece of promotional literature.

Although the mindset you use to create short leaflets involves some of the same marketing strategy that goes into catalog development, the catalog requires additional thought because of the depth and breadth of information it can convey.

POSITIONING YOUR PRODUCTS

The first and most important consideration in creating a catalog lies in positioning what you sell in a way that appeals to the prospective customers who look through the pages of your project.

Matching the catalog's style to your selling needs holds the key to developing a successful way to showcase your products.

If you're not sure what makes your products appeal to purchasers and how to use that information to increase conversion rates, consider some research to quantify who buys from you and why. With your customers' concerns identified, you can create text that addresses their motivations.

Lifestyle-oriented catalogs show readers how products match up with their dreams, desires, and motivations. Just-the-facts catalog text can tell the story of practical products. Some catalogs devote large amounts of page space to individual products. Others display only small photos and bullet-point copy. Legal considerations or regulations can apply to many types of goods, potentially limiting the messages you can convey, or requiring you to include specific disclaimers for compliance. Among these considerations lies a large range of options to evaluate.

The type of catalog you create has everything to do with the types of products or services you sell and the attributes that define your typical customers.

- For example, a catalog for **a high-end, designer-oriented line of kitchen appliances** may devote more text to conjuring up the lifestyle that the company's target consumers want to lead than to providing nuts-and-bolts descriptions of dimensions and specifications. These critically important facts don't interest most purchasers before they make a buying decision. Instead of trying to attach these dry details to the atmospheric romance of a lifestyle vignette, the appliance company may restrict these factual statistics to a back-of-the-book specification section or to a separate installation brochure.

- A catalog of **wholesale electronics parts** may require exactly the opposite form of content from the foodie romance of recipes, ranges, and refrigerators. A just-the-facts recitation of features and specifications may do a better job of positioning these types of purely functional products, with no need for lifestyle "aroma" to make the sale. Between these two opposing philosophies lie many alternatives that blend them together in varying ratios.

THE UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Before you can put together an effective catalog that gets your target consumers' attention and positions what you sell in the best possible light, you need a close understanding of what will motivate your prospects to buy from you.

What do you offer that your competition does not?

The answer to that question defines your unique selling proposition, or USP, the essence of the answer to the consumer question, "What makes you different, and why should I buy from you instead of from someone else?"

Once you know what your customers want, you have a better idea of how to position your offerings so they attract buying interest. To clarify and refine your USP, you may need to conduct some additional competitive research beyond the level of identifying companies that can attract the same customers. If these competitors issue catalogs, examine their offerings and analyze how they position themselves. Your catalog, and how it depicts you and your products, can help you differentiate yourself, rising above these competitive pressures to provide compelling marketing messages.

APPEALING TO YOUR SPECIFIC CUSTOMERS

With your USP in mind, and an understanding of the demographics that define your typical customers, think about the circumstances under which they're motivated to make a purchase.

If you sell big-ticket items, look closely at the catalogs from the manufacturers of high-end kitchen appliances. The person who buys kitchen appliances does so once every decade or two, and may spend several thousands of dollars or more on a durable purchase. This buyer's concerns cen-

ter around how the appliances will enable him or her to prepare food and enjoy spending time in the kitchen.

If your big-ticket items fulfill comparable needs and desires, identify them and write them out so you can focus your catalog messaging toward meeting those needs.

Conversely, if you sell products that don't benefit from conveying lifestyle factors to influence buying decisions, you may need a catalog that relies on straightforward bullet-point text and charts of specifications. These types of presentations work well for items that sell based on performance factors that enable them to compete with other products on the basis of price and performance.

The purchasing manager for an electronics firm or a construction company wants to know basic facts about capacitor behavior or fastener use, not an atmospheric description designed to conjure up visions of life enhancement. Again, writing out a description of the needs your typical customers seek to address can help you create positioning messages that resonate with those customers.

Catalogs also differ in the extent to which they rely on visual material and the types of material they use.

- The lifestyle-oriented catalog that sells home furnishings typically uses an abundance of high-quality studio photography captured on sets that look like real home interiors, or even in the homes of actual customers.

- The nuts-and-bolts catalog may include small thumbnail images of parts or packaging, or it may rely entirely on black-and-white line art to show part configuration and align with specification guides.

Tip: Plan your catalog to include the types of visual information that give your customers the information they need.

Tip: To maximize the success of your catalog project, match the style of catalog you create to the types of products you sell.

2. CHOOSING OUTPUT METHODS

PRINT VS. DIGITAL

Although digital catalogs can be shared with minimal effort, attached to e-mail messages and saved in a computer folder, printed catalogs increase the likelihood that one issue of your project reaches multiple readers. One of print's greatest strengths lies in its ability to provide lasting documents that readers share and pass on, effectively multiplying the audience for a single issue. Readers may dog ear pages to mark items of interest, insert bookmarks, or use self-adhesive notes to flag special items. They can review printed catalogs with friends or relatives, and even tear out pages to add them to an idea file.

Digital catalogs have their aptitudes as well, including the ability to incorporate interactive features. The printed page can't accommodate onscreen links to online content, page-to-page jumps between related items, embedded audio and video, and other elements that require electronic files. Although catalog development may require the same amount of effort to create a digital result as to prepare for printed output, digital catalogs avoid the use of paper and may appeal to customers who are attracted to environmentally friendly marketing efforts.

Note on prodalist: by changing a few settings (mainly resolution, margin, double side printing) prodalist permits both pdf & pro-printer, and even an app version

DIGITAL CATALOGS, CUSTOMER OUTPUT

When you distribute a catalog in digital form, your customer becomes the printer, using office technology to create printed output of a select few relevant pages. Even if you don't supply printed catalogs yourself, it's important to keep on-paper output in mind as you design, formulate, and produce your project. For example, most desktop output devices lay down toner or ink within a set of margins defined not just by a document itself but also by the limitations of the output hardware. Laser and inkjet printers use rollers and grippers to move pages through the output path inside these devices. These paper-feed mechanisms help define the limits within which desktop output devices can address overall dimensions of a piece of paper.

Although you can't anticipate the effective page-printing dimensions that apply to every printer your customers will use, you can examine the printable area on your own devices and use their limitations to determine the safe area on your page designs. Safe areas represent the page limits within which critical information (text, important graphic elements, page numbers) must appear. Outside these limits, elements may fall prey to output devices' mechanically imposed "margins."

Printing catalogs on a do-it-yourself basis becomes difficult and time consuming as the numbers of pages and copies climb. If an output device can't automate the process of duplexing (printing on both sides of a sheet of paper), you're limited to manual duplexing.
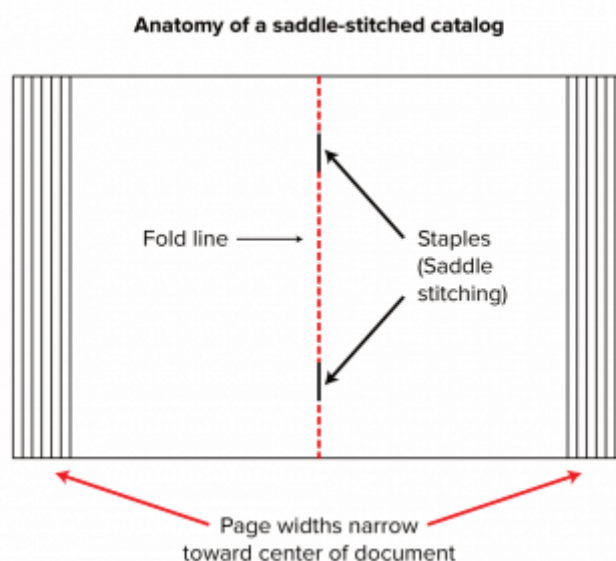
That process can require you to spend a fair amount of time feeding pages into your printer and assuring that you orient them in the correct direction to produce output that's oriented in the correct direction on both sides.

BINDING METHODS

Saddle stitching

If you plan to distribute a printed catalog that's folded at the midline and stapled together (in a process that commercial printers call saddle stitching), you must work your way through an additional step to assure that the printed pages appear in the correct order. If you disassemble a saddle-stitched booklet, you discover that the pages print in a very different order than they appear as you read.

Anatomy of a saddle-stitched catalog

Fold line →

Staples
(Saddle
stitching)

Page widths narrow
toward center of document

Organizing pages in the proper order for bound output involves a process called imposition, which many page-layout applications can simplify for you. However, an imposed saddle-stitched booklet must contain multiples of four pages, with two on each side of the sheet. If your project contains either an odd number of pages or a page count that's not divisible by four, you must create proper signatures. That correction involves adding blank pages to your document, increasing the number of pages of information, or removing pages.

Saddle stitching can accommodate projects up to approximately 100 pages, depending on the page dimensions. Once you reach the 100-page mark, you must consider moving to another binding method because saddle stitching fares poorly on long projects. The finishing processes applied to saddle-stitched documents explain the limitations of the process.

When you open a saddle-stitched project to its center and press it fully flat, you see that the page width decreases from the front cover toward the center and increases again from the center to the back cover. This phenomenon occurs because saddle-stitched catalogs are folded closed and trimmed at their open vertical edge after they go through the binding process. Without trimming, the widths of the pages would appear to increase toward the center because of the accumulated thickness of the sheets of paper at the fold line of the document. Saddle-stitched booklets with large numbers of pages can lose a substantial portion of page width toward their centers, which can mean a loss of information as the pages are trimmed. As a result, perfect binding becomes the method of choice for long projects.

Perfect binding

Perfect binding produces a booklet with a page count that consists of a multiple of two pages, a wraparound cover, and a spine. The spine consists of a flat area produced by the two 90-degree folds that force the cover to wrap around the interior pages. As a result, page thicknesses do not accumulate at the spine, and page widths do not decrease throughout the catalog, avoiding the two biggest limitations of saddle stitching.

Perfect binding comes with its own usability drawback, however. Unlike saddle-stitched projects, perfect-bound catalogs will not lay flat on a tabletop unless you bend their pages backward at the spine until the glue that holds them in place cracks at least slightly. Once you crack its spine, a catalog's pages no longer close gracefully. If the project is bound incorrectly or cheaply, cracking the spine can cause pages to loosen at their bound edge and eventually fall out.

Other choices

Beyond or instead of these two binding methods, printers (commercial and in-house) can use other binding methods to finish projects. These methods include plastic or wire coils that fit through small holes drilled into the stacked pages, or three-hole drilling to place the pages into a ringed binder.

Some of these binding methods are ideal for projects that require frequent updates to limited numbers of pages. The equipment that applies plastic binding coils to finished documents can flex open a coil to enable the removal of individual pages and the reinsertion of updates. Three-ring bound documents accommodate updates that you can distribute directly to customers. Wire-bound documents can't be unbound temporarily and rebound after the insertion of updated pages, however. The wire is bent in place by the binding process and can't be reshaped afterward. Attempts to reopen and reclose wire binding can cause gaps that allow pages to slip out, or misshapen wire that no longer allows pages to turn freely.

Updatable binding methods can enable you to keep your output from becoming stale when the data in your catalog change to reflect new specifications or pricing. Updates can limit the amount of paper your catalog uses. The drawbacks to updatable binding methods lie in their appearance. Because plastic-coil binding machines have become common office equipment, and anyone can create a document for insertion into a three-ring binder, these systems can make a catalog look as if you produced it on a copier in your office. That appearance may make your business look smaller and less capable of handling large orders, for example, or simply cheapen your catalog.

TYPES OF COMMERCIALLY PRINTED OUTPUT

Commercial printing relies on three basic types of output.

Digital printing

Digital printing consists of a very high-end implementation of laser or inkjet output. It can print areas of solid color as well as the continuously changing tonal values in a color photograph. This method can yield results that look like they came out of a conventional commercial printing press.

Of all the output methods, digital printing has the most in common with the desktop inkjet or laser printer in your office, at the same time that it can produce results that rival those of four-color process-color printing on a traditional printing press. To reproduce small quantities of full-color material, digital printing offers the sole cost-effective alternative.

However, if you plan to print several thousands of copies, digital printing can be less of a bargain, as its price per printed copy stays the same regardless of the size of your press run.

Spot-color printing

Spot-color printing uses specialized inks, each premixed to yield a specific color. The formulas and the colors they produce come from color reference guides created by commercial entities that establish the standards and the ink mixtures required to print them.

Spot color printing can't do a good job of rendering color photographs because it lacks the abil-

ity to reproduce the millions of shades that can occur in a color picture. It can tint a black-and-white photo, however, which can yield interesting stylized results. To add more colors, you must use more inks, which raises the cost of printing.

Process-color printing

Process-color printing uses four primary inks (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black), which apply individually to build up various shades and colors. Like digital printing, it can reproduce solid color blocks as well as color photos. The inks don't always do a good job of reproducing certain bright colors, especially orange and cobalt blue.

Process color can cost more than spot color, but if you want to incorporate full-color photographs of your products in your catalog, you'll need the ability to reproduce them.

PRINTED VS. DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

If you plan to distribute your catalog solely in digital form (that is, as a PDF file), you don't need to worry about the types of colors you select, or about translating the RGB photos you capture with your digital camera into CMYK images for output on a commercial press. You can choose any color you like from any color system you want to use. It's important to remember, however, that the color results you see on your computer monitor may look very different from how those same colors appear on another person's monitor or on paper.

For output on a commercial printing press, you'll need to decide how you'll print and therefore what kinds of colors you can use. For a spot-color project, you're likeliest to use black-and-white photos, black text, and a second color as an accent on strategic type and backgrounds. For a process-color project, you can use full-color, black-and-white, or tinted photos, and color accents.

Tip: Choose spot color to reproduce specific bright shades and process color to accommodate color photography. Add a fifth spot color to a process-color project to combine the advantages of both systems.

Tip: Remember that all other things being equal, more inks equal higher printing costs. If you need a wide range of spot colors to present your visual message, you'll cut your printing costs substantially if you can move to process color or digital-press output.

3. TYPOGRAPHY

One of the most fundamental decisions you must make in creating a catalog lies in choosing the typefaces that you'll use to set the text content of your work. You may be accustomed to using the word "font" to refer to individual typefaces. Technically, a font consists of all the individual characters (letters, numbers, punctuation, accented characters, etc.) that are available in a typeface. The word "typeface" designates an individual typographic design.

You're probably familiar with Helvetica and Times New Roman, both of which are typefaces.

A typeface family consists of a group of different widths and weights of an individual design.

A typical family includes regular and bold weights, an italicized regular weight, and a bold italic. Large typeface families may include thin, light, medium, semi-bold, extra bold, heavy, and black weights, each potentially with a matching italic. Some decorative typefaces include only one weight and lack italics altogether.

> **Note on prodalist:** prodalist permits to use any True Type Font (TTF) installed on the designer's computer. Most common fonts are indicated. When using less standard fonts, it is strongly recommended to either providing them along with the project, or to embed them in the pdf. In case of pro-printing, some agreement with the professional is mandatory at least the first time.

Serif typefaces

Serif typefaces incorporate small decorative strokes at the ends of the lines that make up the forms of individual letters. Although the origin of these designs is clear, the explanations of the reasons for their use are disputed. Serif typefaces first appeared in ancient Roman stone carving. Some experts assert that the serifs enabled carvers to tidy up the ends of carved strokes. Other explanations claim that the letters originated as painted brush strokes, and that carvers simply followed the tapered ends of the strokes themselves. Whatever the truth of the matter, serif typefaces possess enduring charm and beauty.

SERIF TYPEFACE EXAMPLES (All samples shown at the same type size)

OLD STYLE
Berkeley Old Style   Galliard   Goudy Old Style   Adobe Jenson

TRANSITIONAL
Baskerville   Caslon 224   Mrs. Eaves   Clearface

MODERN
Bodoni   Century   Didot   Electra

SLAB SERIF
Clarendon   Memphis   **Rockwell**   Beton

Serif typefaces come in four basic types.

A. Old-style faces display significant uniformity among the thicknesses of strokes. The thinnest and thickest elements are very similar in width.
B. Transitional typefaces contain greater variation in stroke thickness than you'll see in a typical old-style face.
C. Modern serif typefaces carry the thin-thick variation to greater extremes.
D. Slab serifs use thick, often rectangular serifs that are as thick as the thickest strokes in the letterforms themselves.

Sans serif typefaces

Sans serif typefaces take their name from the fact that they lack the additional strokes that give serif typefaces their classification and their character. Like serif typefaces, sans serif faces exist in a quartet of basic types.

SANS SERIF TYPEFACE EXAMPLES (All samples shown at the same type size)

GROTESQUE

Akzidenz Grotesk	Franklin Gothic	News Gothic	Trade Gothic

NEO-GROTESQUE

Helvetica	Folio	Gotham	Univers

GEOMETRIC

Avant Garde	Avenir	Futura	Kabel

HUMANIST

Gill Sans	Meta	Myriad	Proxima Nova

A. Grotesque typefaces echo old-style serif faces in their lack of stroke-width variation.
B. Neo-grotesque faces offer limited variation in stroke width, but they come in large families that include many weights and width.
C. Geometric typefaces use geometric shapes as the basis for some of their letterforms. Their high readability at large sizes pairs with their less-readable appearance when set as body copy.
D. Humanist typefaces display greater stroke-width variation than other types of sans serif typefaces.

Historically, serif typefaces have formed the first choices for long-form typesetting, such as the text of books and the product descriptions in catalogs. Onscreen, the legibility trophy goes to sans serif typefaces instead.

Other forms of typography

Along with serif and sans serif typefaces, the world of typography also includes script and other decorative options. These faces don't work well for anything other than brief phrases or short headlines. They favor appearance over legibility. These options may work well for specialized use, but they don't perform well on long-form text. The most useful way to integrate script typefaces into a catalog project can come in the form of customer testimonials, which you can typeset to simulate handwriting.

CATALOG TYPEFACE SELECTION

Choosing the typefaces for your catalog should involve some careful thought and experimentation. The following criteria can help you narrow your selection.

Company identity

Look at your logo. Does it contain type? A logo that largely consists of a typographic element or elements is called a word mark. When you select the typography for a catalog, remember that your brand and identity—you logo, that is—will appear on the work, and that the type you use in the catalog itself must harmonize with that logo. That doesn't mean you must use the typeface from your logo throughout your catalog, just that the catalog should not use typefaces that clash with your corporate identity.

For example, if your logo uses a bold, industrial-looking sans serif typeface, you won't want to set your catalog headlines in a flowing, graceful serif design. Typography creates a mood and sets an impression. The forceful, blunt look of the logo will be at odds with the accent typography, setting up a dissonant appearance. Look for an accent typeface that extends, rather than clashes with, your brand's visual identity.

Output methods

Consider your output and delivery methods. Will your catalog ever appear on printed pages? If so, give some thought to using a serif typeface for body copy, or at least to selecting a sans serif face that offers good legibility.

Readability and fatigue

The truest test of the suitability of a typeface for catalog work comes when you set a long sample of text in the typeface and sit down to read the content, either on paper or on screen but preferably both. Is the text fatiguing to read? Do you find your eyes wandering off the paper because the type makes reading difficult? If you answer "yes" to either of these questions, you may need to reconsider your typeface selection.
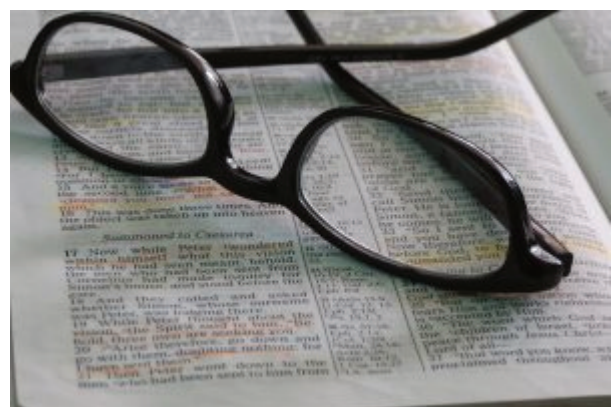
Of course, reading fatigue also can stem from type that's too small for the intended application, or from type that's set with too little distance between the lines. That distance, called "leading," takes its name from the days when typesetters worked with molten lead that was cast into the forms of individual letters or blocks of text, and small pieces of lead inserted between individual lines of text produced the regularized appearance of line of after line of verbal content. To verify whether or not a typeface works poorly on long-

form text, test sample content with various sizes of letter forms and with varying amounts of leading.

Typeface families and typesetting flexibility

Think about the ways in which you'll need to use your type, and verify that any typeface family you're considering includes a wide enough range of widths and weights to accommodate all the styles and situations in which you need to use type. For example, you may need an ultra-bold condensed typeface for headlines, a regular/bold/italic/bold-italic combination for body copy with accented, emphasized words and subheads, and other weights for additional applications.

Obtaining font software

While you're making typeface selections, consider using a typeface that you already possess, one that came with a piece of software that you installed on your computer (for example, Microsoft Office) or one that's part of your computer operating system. If you don't find what you want among the typefaces you already have, examine some of the seemingly infinite variety of typographic resources you can purchase from typeface merchants. Some merchants offer the work of a wide range of independent designers and multi-designer font foundries. Other merchants specialize in the work of one foundry or one design collective. You may be able to find the same typefaces at more than one merchant site, with better or higher pricing depending on where you look, so some research may save you money. In addition, many typeface merchants offer special sales that include deep discounts on attractive offerings.

Combining typefaces

Many designers use serif and sans serif typefaces together in the same catalog project. A serif typeface forms the body copy, with sans serif subheads, heads, and captions, or vice versa, depending on the delivery medium and the style of the catalog. The trick is to avoid using so many different typefaces that your work looks jumbled and the typographic variety begins to detract from the cohesion of the work.

Beware of "bargains"

You can find large numbers of free typefaces online. Some of these typefaces, such as many of those you can find at Google Fonts, offer high-quality work that's truly suitable for any project, catalogs included. Other free typefaces are poorly designed, contain only partial character sets, and include errors in their programming that make them malfunction when printed.

The old saying, "You get what you pay for," really can apply to type.

USING TYPOGRAPHIC STYLES

Once you select the typography for your catalog project, you need to establish a set of basic styles that will apply consistently to repeated text elements.

This styling process helps give your project a cohesive look and make it easier to read.

The page layout software that many designers use offers extensive type-style functionality, including both paragraph and character styles. As their name suggests, paragraph styles apply to entire paragraphs, pages, and chapters of typesetting projects. Character styles apply to small stretches of text, turning an emphasized word bold or changing the color of a single word in a headline. Each style contains an entire package of typesetting attributes that a designer can apply

to selected text with a single mouse click or even using a special keyboard shortcut. Along with that quick-click convenience, styles offer the further advantage of being easy to change.

If you decide that you want all your body text slightly larger than you initially typeset it, you can edit the style and watch as all the type to which it applies changes instantaneously. This form of workflow efficiency validates every minute a designer spends in setting up styles.

Tip: Choose catalog typefaces that offer strong readability for longer stretches of text, and that harmonize with your company's brand identity rather than clash with it. Choose large typeface families if you need multiple styles for different types of typographic accents, including headlines, subheads, pull quotes, captions, product specifications, diagram callouts, etc.

Tip: Avoid incorporating more than three typeface families in a single catalog project (one for body text, one for headlines and other accents, and one for brief promotional messages). You can make an exception to this rule if you plan to incorporate multiple customer testimonials and use an array of script typefaces to make them look like a variety of individuals' handwriting.

4. CHOOSING COLORS AND USING THEM EFFECTIVELY

Color adds interest and emphasis. It can highlight important items and draw the reader's eye to specific elements on the page. How you use color also depends on how you plan to output your catalog.

Some colors reproduce equally well on just about any output equipment. Others fall outside the reproduction gamut of some types of printing equipment and may be challenging to view on your computer monitor. A device's gamut represents the range of colors and shades it can represent.
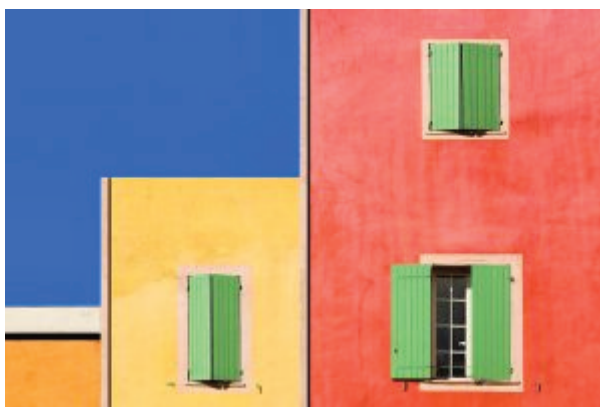
In the section on output methods, we discuss the concepts of spot and process color. Spot colors represent premixed inks that load into a printing press, each as a specific color. Process-color printing relies on four primary inks (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black) that combine on the press to produce a wide range of shades. Some bright, highly saturated spot colors don't translate well to process color.

Types of color output

Spot color
Premixed ink

Process color
Four primary inks
(cyan, magenta, yellow, black)
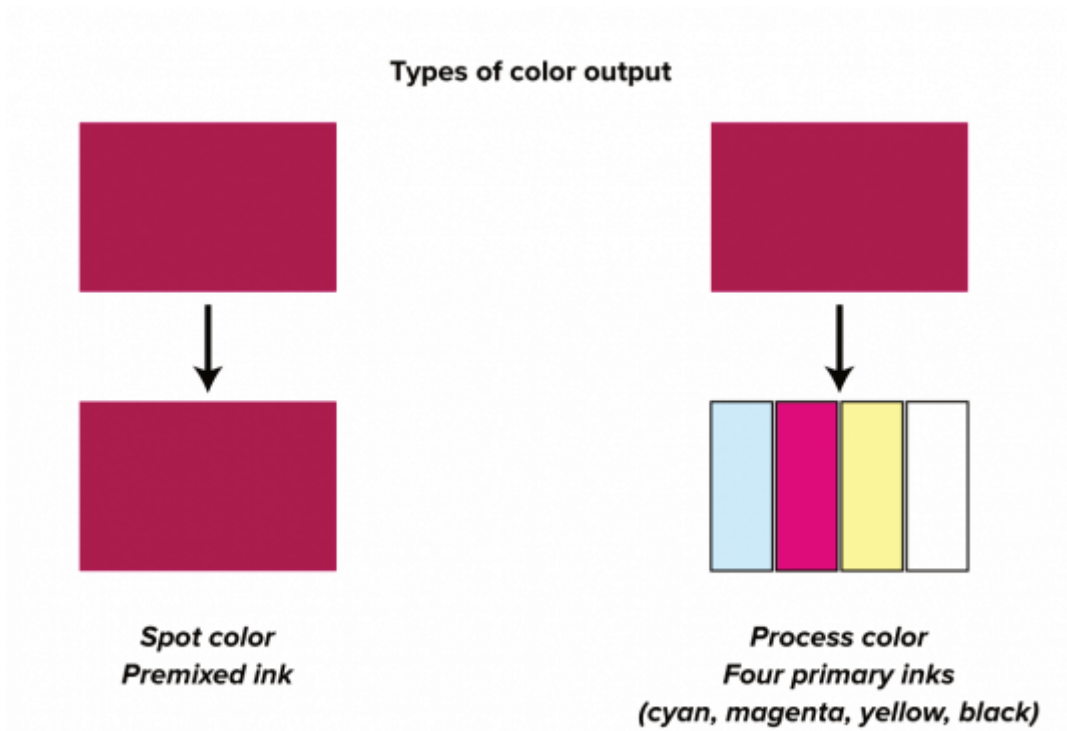
These shades may be difficult for digital printing equipment to reproduce faithfully as well. When you choose and implement color accents (for type, graphic elements, and page backgrounds), rely on colors that favor your chosen output methods.

If you plan to distribute your catalog only in digital form, you can use any colors you like, but remember that what you see on screen may not represent the way the colors would appear on an output device that's capable of reproducing them accurately on paper.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND METHODS

Color selections always require thoughtful attention. Which colors show up in your products themselves? Which colors appear in your logo? Your best color choices accent and harmonize with the shades and tones that you're already using.

Designers use swatch books that display samples of all the colors in the process or spot color systems they use. Placing a swatch next to an object is one way of finding out what color will match the object. Once you identify a suitable color, you can use it in the page-layout program you choose. Additionally, your logo most likely was designed using specific shades from a defined color system. Ideally, the person who designed it gave you a full set of notes on the colors used. You can use these notes to select colors to implement in your catalog design.

Note on prodalist: prodalist permits to define a color palette in the *Options* menu. These colors can be either automatically or manually retrieved in several section of the software (background designer, section styles …).

What colors say

Colors also convey mood and emotion, but the correlations between colors and these states vary from one culture to another. If you know that your customer demographics point to one specific part of the world as the dominant source of your revenue, study the color usage in that area and adjust your color selections to harmonize with societal norms and traditions.

For example, western civilizations wear black to funerals and associate black as the color of mourning. In other parts of the world, white serves the same purpose. A catalog with a generalized distribution that doesn't favor one geographic area faces fewer potential constraints on color usage.

Color families

Color selection involves making aesthetic decisions. Many designs center around two carefully chosen colors that contrast harmoniously with each other, such as blue and yellow, purple and gold, or brown and green.

Some designs add a third color to the palette of accents. In addition to the full-strength versions of these colors, designers can add tints that produce lighter shades for use in accents and as background shades. These tints consist of percentages of the base color. Of course, some colors translate into identifiably different shades when they're used at less than full strength, especially red, which becomes pink.

As a result, it's important to select dominant colors with an eye to how you can use them and what impressions they may convey.
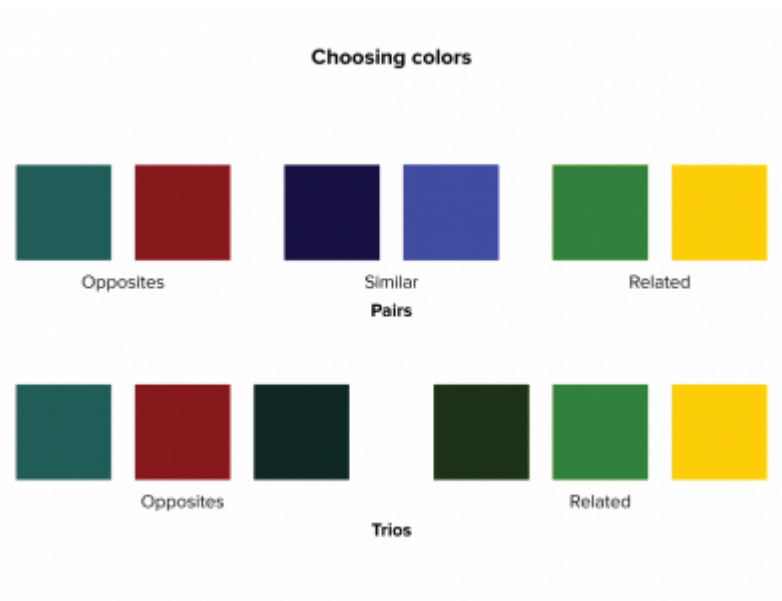
Color for readability

In addition to clarifying the relationships among the colors you choose, strongly consider selecting at least one color that's dark enough to use for the occasional short stretch of text, such as a headline or subhead.
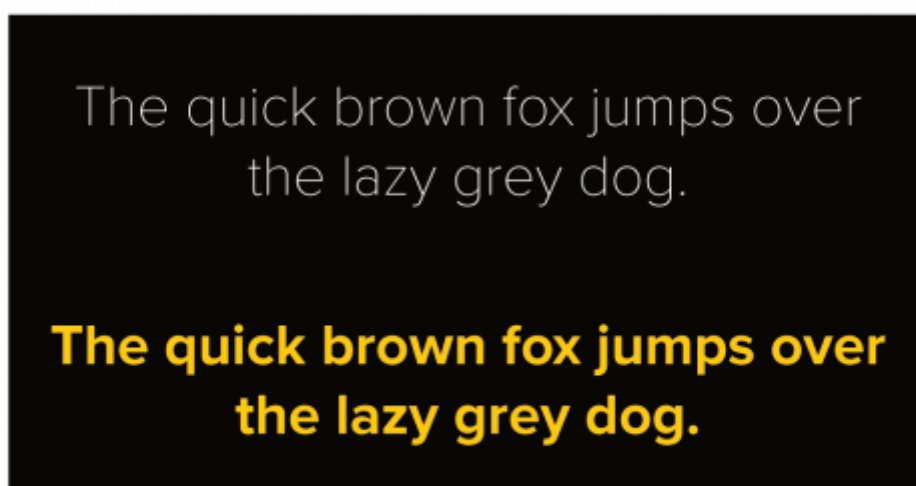
Light colors do not produce highly readable type, especially at small sizes, unless you place the text in front of a dark background.

That combination produces enough contrast to make the text discernable.

Reverse type

Designers refer to the placement of light-colored text over a dark background as reverse type.

Reverse type

The quick brown fox jumps over
the lazy grey dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over
the lazy grey dog.

**Thin reversed type is more difficult to print and read than bolder reversed type.
Choose reverse-type color thoughtfully for maximum contrast and legibility.**

This technique can add a touch of drama to a page design. However, most people find long stretches of reverse type difficult to read, especially at small sizes. The result can be an attractive page that readers skip or skim because of its challenging legibility.

Tip: Select two or three accent colors that harmonize with each other and with your logo. Keep color use consistent so it conveys the same type of information or level of importance each time it appears (for example, always use red to indicate warnings or green to identify best practices). Avoid using a large number of colors unless you need a broader color palette to identify a wide range of product lines. Too many colors can cause visual confusion.

Tip: When you're planning your logo (or if you're planning to redesign it), choose colors that reproduce well in a variety of output methods. A matched set of spot and process colors chosen from recognized color systems will give you the greatest amount of flexibility and simplify the task of making your catalog visually consistent with the rest of your expressions of company identity.

5. IMAGE SELECTION AND PLANNING

How do you plan to depict your products? The answer to this question carries significant weight in determining your overall catalog design.

Size

Regardless of whether you want to show featured images of your products or restrict their depiction to thumbnail sizes, you'll want to capture your photos at a large size that enables you to produce multiple smaller variations. Small photographs pixel ate when you enlarge them. Large images become slightly softer in appearance when you reduce their dimensions. Of these two problems, only the latter can be overcome without re-photographing your subject matter.

 Large images require closer attention to detail. Dust and fingerprints become evident as image size increases, and they quickly pose a distraction that takes away from the perceived status or value of the product.

> **Note on prodalist:** prodalist has extensive automatic image resizing functions. It is **strongly recommended to keep original pictures at their maximum size in a dedicated folder -untouched-**, and resize/crop at will into a different folder, depending on the size & resolution required. This -per project- folder will likely be updated, depending on the type of catalog to be produced, ie image sizes will change from a pro-print catalog, to an electronic version to be emailed as small as possible.

Views

Do you want to incorporate multiple views of each product, showing it from a variety of angles? Will only specific products receive this type of featured treatment? If you're unsure which items you'll want to depict from more than one vantage point, you're better off photographing everything from all of your chosen perspectives, giving you the flexibility to expand your image resources as needed.

Environment

How you photograph your products determines how you can present them. Some catalogs use isolated images that display no background details or distractions. To capture these images, the products are placed in front of a seamless background, typically white. You can use these images as is, or extract the products from the background to remove all traces of shadow detail.

Backgrounds

removed background

Alternatively, some products benefit from inclusion into a background that looks like their real functional environment. For example, some home furnishing catalogs show furniture, dishes, and flatware in real dining room settings. Others use sets that mimic the real thing but are set up in a photographer's studio. These environmental images work well when they're combined with text that describes real-life usage and other circumstances that match up with what the reader seeks to accomplish through using the product in question.

Remember that background detail and background clutter aren't the same thing. Photographs negate the third perceptual dimension, flattening foreground into background. The classic distraction involves something that appears to become part of the foreground subject, such as in a standing portrait captured in front of a potted palm that now appears to sprout from the subject's head. It's much easier to avoid these problems as you're taking photographs than to go through the image-editing gymnastics required to remove distractions after the fact.

Always view your images carefully before you remove what you're photographing and move on to capturing views of other products. Re-photograph any image that lacks a clear distinction between foreground subject and background details. This consideration becomes especially important if you plan to convert your images from full color into black and white. In color images, hues and shades can enable objects to contrast against background colors that appear nearly identical when reduced to grayscale.

Note on prodalist: prodalist permits to automatically remove the background (even in batch), providing some cares have been taken during the photoshooting.

Image impressions

As you capture photographs of your products for use in your catalog, think about the impressions your images will create on the document page. Some objects require special attention to photograph well, including all-black products and those with reflective trim. Black absorbs light. Without sufficient illumination, a black object turns into an undifferentiated blob. Chrome and other reflective surfaces can cause hot spots in an image, featureless areas in which no details remain visible. Examine your photos carefully for problems such as these, and invest the time necessary to capture images that do your products justice.

Tip: Always photograph your products so the images provide useful information about product size, function, and attributes that tie in to your unique selling proposition. A bad photograph can do more to hurt your product image than a good photo can do to present it in a positive light.

6. PROJECT DESIGN AND PAGE-SIZE SELECTION

Aside from catalogs produced in specialized shapes through the use of customized hardware and a process called die cutting, most catalogs assume some form of rectangular shape, typically with the bound edge of the project at the left side of the outside front cover.

Press printed or digitally distributed, catalogs can take on any dimensions their creators prefer, but a few considerations point the way in favor of specific sizes.

Selecting page sizes

Wide object

Tall object
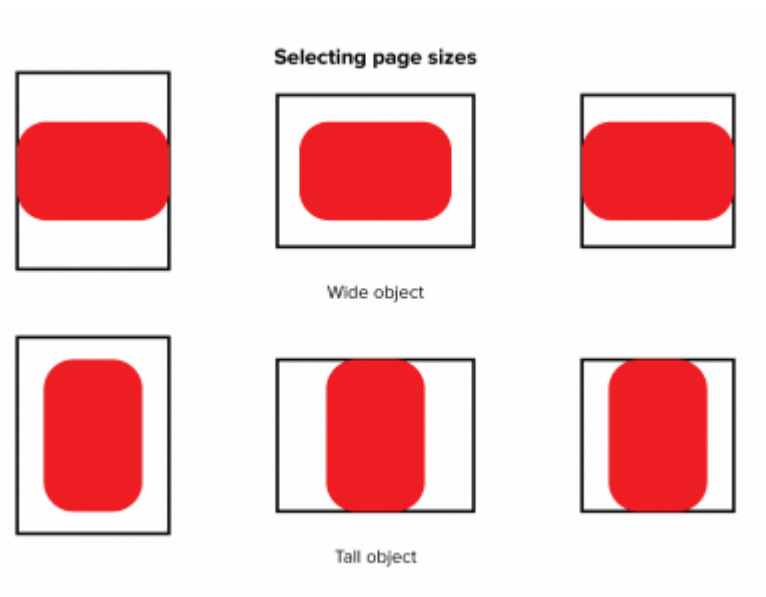
DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

Because digital catalogs "live" onscreen, they make ideal candidates for landscape-orientation pages that fit well within the equivalent shape of computer displays.

Catalogs designed for viewing on mobile devices usually come in the form of iOS or Android apps instead of the PDF files typically used to distribute digital catalog projects.

Note on prodalist: prodalist is the only catalog dedicated authoring software permitting to produce all materials: a pdf for pro-printing, a pdf for emailing & mobile apps

To make digital catalogs easy for consumers to print, many of them adopt the same pages sizes as the defaults for desktop printing: A4 (210 by 297 millimeters) or U.S. Letter (11 by 8.5 inches).

These dimensions place the size of two facing pages within the default sheet size or on a larger sheet that equals double the individual page width. In the U.S., Tabloid (17 by 11 inches) equals two Letter-sized pages side by side, and Letterhalf (5.5 by 8.5 inches) equals half of one Letter-sized page. For desktop output of a digital catalog, however, the typical consumer prints individual pages one at a time

PRESS PRINTING

Commercial printing companies use presses that print on two types of paper. As their name suggests, sheet-fed presses rely on individual sheets of paper at large dimensions suitable for yielding multiple pages of a document. To configure a project for the most efficient uses of these press sheets, designers select page sizes that fit neatly within the confines of an individual sheet. These sizes allow for the marks that printers use to identify where to cut out individual pages. Likewise, these sizes accommodate the extra ink coverage called bleed that extends beyond cut sheet boundaries when a page carries an allover color or image that covers the entire finished page.
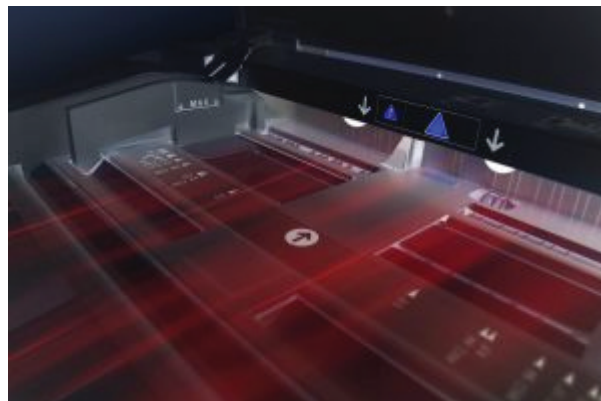
In addition to sheet-fed output, commercial printers also use sheet-fed presses that use long rolls of paper instead of cut sheets. This type of equipment is used to print newspapers. **Most catalogs come from sheet-fed equipment, however.**

Mailing costs also condition the selection of page sizes for press printing. Most catalogs mail as standalone items, with no envelopes or other wrappings, so the availability of off-the-shelf envelopes into which a catalog will fit become less important than it would for other types of mailings. The overall dimensions of a catalog help determine its mailing class and associated costs. In some cases, adjusting catalog dimensions can reduce mailing costs substantially.

Most common catalog formats:

- 8.5"x 11" (Letter) • A4
- 5.5" x 8.5" • A5

Catalog that needs to be embedded in binders by the customer (most technical B2B industries) will usually be a in very standard formats (A4 or Letter in portrait orientation), while more creative catalogs or with a high-end image will frequently prefer some square or landscape format.

Note that magazines, tabloids, digest (…) have others dedicated formats, because printed on different equipment & paper coming from rolls.
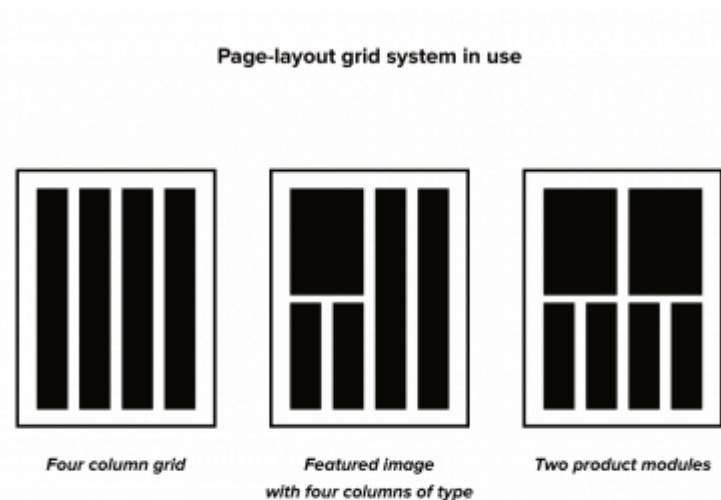
> **Note on prodalist:** prodalist will require you to choose a main unit, usually millimeters or inches, at the start of each project. As it is used throughout all the software except for fonts and line thicknesses in points, although possible, changing it later is not recommended.

DEVELOPING CATALOG PROTOTYPES

As the first stage in a catalog design, prototypes can help you evaluate and refine the look of your project so it does the best possible job of representing your products. The simplest prototypes consist of pieces of paper on which you sketch the location of images and text, or onto which you attach desktop-printed photos and copy content so you can visualize how the final design will function. In your page-layout application, you can create and adjust ideas for how specific types of pages will appear. As you experiment with these design ideas, you also can "audition" typefaces and colors, and see how the copy content you plan to use will fit within the text areas you define. Once you reach the point at which you finalize a cohesive set of page ideas for the various parts of

your catalog design, you can move on to actual document creation, secure in the knowledge that you've prepared for the task with actual visualizations.

As a basis for these types of prototypes, consider developing what designers call a grid system as the foundation of page types and individual pages. With an overall set of page margins in place, a grid system goes on to divide the horizontal dimension of the page space into a series of columns separated by small vertical ribbons of blank space called gutters. To create a page design, you can place text into individual columns, and add photos into areas equal to the width of single or the combination of multiple columns. Along the vertical axis of the page, a grid system can use guide rules (non-printing colored lines to which text and image areas will snap as if magnetically attracted) to indicate the heights devoted to elements such as headlines and images.

Page-layout grid system in use

Four column grid

Featured image
with four columns of type

Two product modules

COMMERCIAL PRINTING: ADDING BLEED TO YOUR LAYOUT

When you prepare a catalog project for commercial printing, your project must meet some specific criteria that accommodate the needs of the output process. If you want to add images, background colors, or any other elements that cover the page all the way up to any or all of its cut edges, these items must include what commercial printers call bleed.

For example, suppose you incorporate an introductory page that includes a large photo of one of your products, and you cover the entire page with the image. When the printer cuts the page out of the press sheet, the guillotine that trims out the page can't simply slice the paper exactly where the photo ends. That would leave an unsightly rind of unprinted paper at the edge of the page.

To achieve this appearance, the image must extend past the trimmed boundaries by a specific distance, typically 0.125" but sometimes as much as 0.25". Extending the image past that cut line enables the printing equipment to produce a page on which the image ends exactly where the page ends. The bleed is trimmed away as the printed project goes through the binding process.

The most-efficient catalog designs use a series of basic page designs, each of which can represent the look of multiple pages in the final document. These basic designs, called master pages, simplify the task of building a catalog with a consistent, well-organized look that makes it easy to find specific products and information. If you've developed a grid system as the basis of your page designs, you transfer the measurements of that grid onto the reusable digital master pages.

A catalog typically includes multiple sections, each focused on a specific type of product or the fulfillment of a specific customer need. Master pages handle the basics of section introductions, product feature pages, main product listing pages, and other types of recurring catalog features. Each master page includes areas for text and graphics. These areas may contain placeholder items that show what kind of content goes where.

Creating product modules

Within the formulation of catalog prototypes and master pages, you may choose to divide up page space further into product modules that you can use to build up individual pages. Modules can make quick work of page building when each product requires approximately the same amount of photographic space to depict it, and the same number and length of feature copy points to describe it. If you build a module so a specific number of repetitions of it fit neatly into an individual catalog page, you can reuse the modular design as many times as necessary to construct pages and sections.

Tip: Unless onscreen page dimensions are your most important consideration, set up your catalog page size so it accommodates the typical dimensions of your product as you depict them in photographs. For example, if your products are short but wide, use landscape-orientation pages so you can use larger product photographs. Conversely, if your products are narrow and tall, use portrait-orientation pages to give your products "breathing room" on the page.

Tip: Use dummies to evaluate catalog dimensions. These blank-paper representations of printed projects are fabricated at actual size from the paper on which the projects will appear in their final form. If you're using a commercial printer, ask the company to provide you with a dummy to help you evaluate how your catalog will feel in the hand and function as a physical object.

Note on prodalist: prodalist page concept is based on a user-defined fixed grid layout (with some flexibility on the grid & even randomness). Each "cells" of the grid contain the template for one or more products. Additionally, some cells can be left empty or skipped or filled automatically with illustrative images.

7. TEXT

Great product photography, compelling product features, and competitive pricing can transform prospects into purchasers—but only if your catalog copy conveys your product story and marketing messages effectively. As you review the text for your catalog, read it from the point of view of your likely customers, and enlist trusted colleagues to provide feedback as well.

Remember that your expert knowledge and opinion of what you sell may not reflect the same interests and concerns that motivate your customers.

Your text must answer their questions and respond to their concerns. To help make your text as insightful and effective as possible, write or commission it based on your knowledge of how your customers think, what they buy, and why they choose the items they purchase.

Remember to consider voice or tone, as well as factual content, in producing the text content for your catalog.

The voice represents the personality of your catalog, the invisible salesperson who speaks to your customers through its pages and delivers your sales message. Only you can decide if that voice should be conversational, like a message from a knowledgeable and trusted friend, or the formal phraseology of an authority figure or neutral observer.

Simple writing choices, such as the use or avoidance of contractions ("can't" for "cannot," "it's" for "it is," and so on), can go a long way toward establishing the voice of your catalog. Consumer products may make obvious candidates for conversational copy, whereas scientific or technical products may benefit from a more-formal tone.

Tip: If you write your own catalog copy, set it aside for several days after you complete it so you can review it objectively. Freshly written text can be difficult to evaluate because you know what you meant to say and read with an ear to your intended message rather than what you actually said.

8. PAGE BUILDING

Page-layout applications rely on combinations of visual and typographic styles that can be assembled into templates. Templates provide an assortment of master pages (like templates within the template) that address the format requirements of an individual catalog project, including product listings, product features, and introductory pages. These templates save large amounts of time and effort at the same time that they reduce the prospect of inconsistent formatting. When it comes to creating catalog layouts, you can build your pages using several templated alternatives.

A. Purchase a template. Like the stylistic presets used for creating blogs and websites through content management systems such as WordPress and Joomla!, page-layout templates establish everything from document size and margins to typographic styles, color schemes, page organization, and the overall look of the project. Edit these preset attributes to customize a template for your use. For example, you can replace the template's dominant colors with those used in your logo, or edit type styles to change typeface implementations.

B. Commission a template. Instead of purchasing a prefabricated template and customizing it, define your expectations and commission a template from an expert designer who specializes in the page-layout software package you've chosen to use. This option enhances your control over the look of the project and minimizes the amount of time you need to spend achieving the style you want. You'll pay more for a custom template than for a prefabricated one, but you may save valuable time by limiting the amount of tailoring and tinkering required to attain the look you want.

C. Create a template of your own. This option presupposes that you have gained enough mastery over your chosen page-layout application to set up an efficiently constructed template that takes advantage of important best practices in document design. For example, you'll need to create paragraph styles for dominant types of text formatting, such as headlines, subheads, and body copy, and you'll need to understand how to construct pages with limited but correctly implemented page objects. Creating your own template provides you with the ultimate in control over customized document design without the expense of investing in an expert to assist you.

You also can combine some of these options to create a best-practice template. Create your own template and commission an expert to review and adjust it for efficiency. If you want to avoid the work involved in creating your own template, start with a prefabricated template and pay an expert to customize it for you.

TYPOGRAPHY AND "FLOW"

All good layouts take into consideration a list of important variables that either contribute to or detract from the viability of a catalog as a marketing and selling tool. As you begin to determine the type of page design you want, think about the flow of information on facing pages (or on a single

page, if your design will present one sheet of paper at a time). Left-to-right languages tend to produce equivalently left-to-right reading tendencies. To maximize the information that the reader internalizes on looking at an individual two-page spread from your catalog, imagine the reader's eyes traversing the pages from the top left of the left-hand page to the bottom right of the facing page. If everything on the spread is the same size, everything conveys the same level of importance.

When the sizes of text and imagery remain consistent across a two-page spread, you can use other elements of the design to add importance or focus to individual products. The use of color to make a product name or feature pop off the page can draw attention to a specific item. Adding a burst (an irregular or starburst shape filled with color and carrying superimposed text) to convey a sale message or some other highlight can add prominence to a single item on an otherwise unweighted pair of pages.

Page-layout grid system in use

Four column grid

Featured image with four columns of type

Two product modules
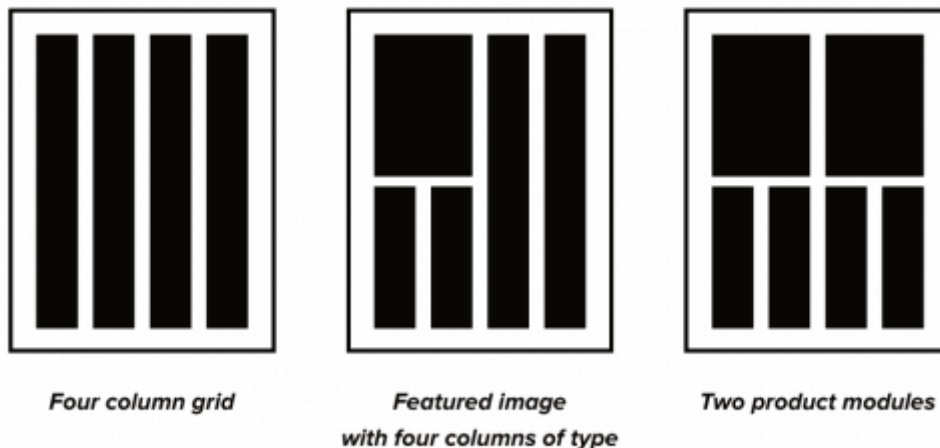
A page design that incorporates a larger featured element at the top left of the left-hand page and another at the bottom right of the right-hand page, with individual products occupying the rest of the page space, can draw attention to features, product functions, and lifestyle benefits, or convey a product story based on a real customer's experience. This type of featured element also can cover the developmental history of a product and the ways in which customer input shaped the product offering, or profile a company staff member whose experiences or message connect the product more directly with customer need.

These are only two options out of a virtually limitless array of ways to use catalog page space in featuring your products.

One of the most-important features of some catalogs lies in leaving parts of the pages blank to increase the impact of the items depicted. Called negative space or white space, these areas help direct the reader's eyes to product areas, and can make the pages look spacious and open.

Note on prodalist: in prodalist the flow can be arranged both in a column grid so as in a row grid -horizontal-, but can only have up to two simultaneous user-defined product templates per project.

Leaving negative space can convey a sense of luxury and opulence as well, telling the customer, "These products are so important to us that we want you to be able to focus on them without distractions. We'll add space elsewhere for other things."

> **Note on prodalist:** prodalist has several function to leave empty spaces (cells), either manually defined or randomly
>
> Tip: Test your page designs with actual product photographs and text. Will the message you need to convey fit well into the page "container" your design provides? Rather than reducing type sizes in an attempt to shoehorn more content onto the page, consider adding more pages or enlarging the page size. If these considerations don't look as if they will provide you with enough space for your intended amount of text and visual information, reevaluate your content. Are you including too much information?

9. PLANNING FOR SERIES AND UPDATES

It's always wise to begin a project with an eye to versions, sequels, and follow-ups. Ask and answer some basic questions to help yourself plan. The answers to some of these questions affect the answers to others.

A. How often do you add new products? Frequently? Rarely?
B. How often do you plan to issue your catalog? Monthly? Quarterly? Annually? On an as-needed but irregular basis?
C. How many products do you want to feature in your catalog? Everything you sell? One specific line? Only sale items and closeouts?
D. Will your catalog appear in only one language? If not, will you incorporate multiple languages into each issue or create separate versions in individual languages? Are these languages written using alphabets, logographic or segmental scripts, or syllabaries? Are any of these languages right-to-left reading? In how many of these languages are you fluent?
E. Will you need different catalog variations for different parts of the world, reflecting the need to avoid mentioning certain products where they clash with cultural traditions or local laws?

PRODUCTS AND SCHEDULING

The number of products you want to feature, and the pace at which you update your product line, has an effect on how many pages your catalog may need and how often you issue it. Some companies issue one master catalog each year, with much-smaller updates each month or quarter to list new items and feature sales. Others break up catalog support for a full range of products into specific issues for individual product lines. Some limit catalog coverage to the most important product features, and incorporate hyperlinks to direct the reader to the company website for exhaustive feature lists and specifications.

To narrow down these and other options, consider investing some time in at-least informal customer research. Invite customers to participate in a survey that assesses how often they'd like to see updates. Their responses can shape how you make your plans.

It can be easier to create multiple versions of a catalog, one for each language, than to incorporate multiple languages into each version. Many page-layout applications support the use of individual document layers that you can make visible or invisible with one click on an item in a palette or dialog box. In multi-lingual typesetting, it's common to devote one layer to each language, and to change layer visibility to produce language-specific catalog versions.

One language-based consideration should dominate your decisions about multi-lingual catalog development, however, and that's the issue of the differing lengths of the same message in various languages. If you view one sentence in your native language alongside translations of that sentence into other languages, you quickly discover that the same thoughts and concepts require many more words in some languages than in others, and that even the words themselves may be longer depending on the translation.

For example, English is a relatively compact language, whereas a French, Spanish, Italian, or German translation of an English sentence may require much more space to accommodate additional linguistic structures and longer words. Planning one catalog version for each of these languages would mean using as much space as the lengthiest translation required for items in all languages.

Typographic length in translation

English:

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy gray dog.

Spanish:

El rápido zorro marrón salta sobre el perezoso perro gris.

German:

Der schnelle braune Fuchs springt über den faulen grauen Hund.

When your language support shifts from alphabetic to non-alphabetic languages, however, your typesetting demands increase exponentially. First, you need a page-layout application that can handle non-alphabetic and/or right-to-left languages. Second, you need to adjust layouts for lan-

guages that may write vertically as well as others that write horizontally. In these cases, you may discover quickly that your work will be easier if you create separate versions of your catalog that are optimized for languages with diverse writing systems.

The demands of translation

It's always easier to support multi-lingual catalog development when you are fluent in all the languages you plan to use. Translating catalog copy into other languages opens up the prospect of mistranslations that offend native speakers or leave them laughing at obvious language-to-language errors.

Machine translation can help you understand the gist of a passage written in a language that's unfamiliar to you, but it simply cannot produce text that passes muster when a native speaker reads it. Likewise, partial fluency isn't enough to create material for native speakers. To produce translations suitable for catalog use, you need access to translators who know your original language as well as they know the target language in which you want to communicate.

Choose your translators with care. A friend or relative may agree to provide translation services at little or no cost. If native speakers reject that "free" translation, it can do your reputation more harm than good.

> **Note on prodalist:** easy updates is THE key of prodalist. Changing the product section in a complete catalog is achieved in seconds by simply saying use column D for product description instead of column C. Moreover, prodalist will help you to automatically translate the complete said column into another language -with help of external online services-. Although automatic translations make huge progress, it will still require proofreading. From our experience, is is well adapted to short phrases used in repetitive catalog descriptions texts ("price", "size", "packaging", colors …).

Translation must meet even more specific and demanding standards when you must describe your products using scientific or technical terminology, or when your product fits into a field that involves the use of culturally individualized slang or jargon. It's one thing to speak and write fluently in two languages, as translators must do. If you market scientific or technical products, your translator also must understand the vocabulary that applies. For products that fit into popular culture or that use generational or societal slang, you'll need a translator who can speak "teen," for example, or who understands the cultural context of items such as lifestyle goods, at leisure items, personal hygiene and cosmetic products, and so on.

PRICES AND UPDATES

Along with language support, you need to plan for how you present and update pricing information. Creating a catalog can involve the automated insertion of product and price information using page-layout plug-ins that make live connections to spreadsheets or databases. This process resembles a word-processing mail merge function on a truly grand scale.

> **Note on prodalist:** once more, easy updates is THE key of prodalist. With prodalist, a complete change of price throughout all the catalog, is simply multiplying an MS Excel like column by -let's say- 1.02, or just saying instead of using column "B" for prices, use now column "C".

Pricing data represent a list of catalog design considerations. First, some catalogs omit pricing altogether, either because the company manufactures products that it sells through distributors who establish prices above wholesale, or because the old saying "If you have to ask, you can't afford it" applies to premium goods and the inclusion of price information would create a distraction. Some catalogs include pricing but restrict it to a small boxed area on the page or in the back of the book. Price updates also can raise concerns about the amount of text space required to represent cost data. If your inaugural catalog edition prices a sequence of items at $99.97, for example, you must plan your design to accommodate prices with three digits in front of the decimal point so increases above $100.00 don't disrupt your fundamental layout.

> Tip: When you include price information in a catalog, remember that your competitors will see your work and may use it to adjust their own pricing. If your industry engages in substantial amounts of price competition, consider displaying list prices and communicating a customer discount in a separate document, such as a cover letter.

10. DOCUMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Page-layout applications typically allow you to manage visual assets as linked or embedded files. To minimize the size of your layout file, maximize the quality of visual output, and keep your document efficient to edit, always choose to link rather than embed your visuals. Embedding often relies on copying images from other applications and pasting them into your page layout. This technique can affect the fidelity of color output at the same time that it makes the size of your layout file balloon unnecessarily. Using linked files, you can make changes to graphics and reflect those changes in your layout without the need to copy and paste them into the file again.

> **Note on prodalist:** prodalist keeps the original files separated, and embeds a copy at the last minute when generating the final pdf, with the selected size, resolution and color space.

Consistent file naming conventions make it easier to find specific milestones in your work. As you develop prototypes of your layout and versions of your working document, use numeric version-control signals in your file names to help you track the chronology of individual ideas and changes. Any time you make significant alterations to your work, save your layout file under a new name and increment the version-control portion of the name accordingly. Under this system, your first file version might carry a name constructed as follows:

[season][year][prototype or working file][0x, where "x" is a versioning digit]

In practice, this becomes something like this:

SPR2020Pro_01

This nomenclature would represent a first-draft prototype of a Spring 2020 catalog. Along with this patterned file name, the document also would carry the file extension associated with your page-layout program.

Most page-layout applications include specific commands you can use to collect linked files or produce publication-ready asset collections. These commands can simplify your ability to preserve a complete set of catalog versions over time. In addition to this as-produced archive, your working files enable you to track design features and other elements throughout your work process. After you complete a catalog project, save a copy of the document, along with all its linked file assets, in a new folder reserved for archiving the project.

> **Note on prodalist:** except the dedicated prodalist file, prodalist saves all the documents (table, images,

templates ..) in non proprietary formats, in one open folder dedicated to the project. All accessible. **It is recommended to duplicate the complete folder to make revision or backups.**

Tip: Page-layout applications include the ability to auto-save your working files. This function can help you recover from an application crash. However, it's important to create your own form of file-name version control so you can track your project through the development process. Consider maintaining a log file that identifies the significant additions to or deletions from each version of your layout file.
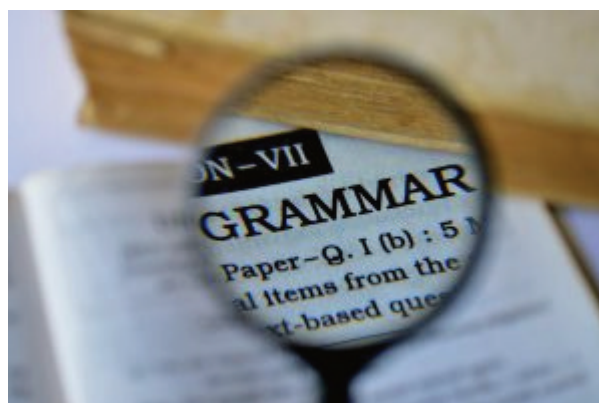
11. PROOFREADING YOUR PROJECT

You've created a catalog design, refined its look, structure, and content, and put the finishing touches on what you hope will be the final page-layout file along your path to completion and production. Before you add "Final" to the file name, however, evaluate every aspect of your project closely so you can identify and correct any errors or problems. Once you send a project out for commercial printing or distribute it digitally to customers, the work becomes difficult (and potentially expensive) to correct.

TEXT

Spell checkers, along with the grammar checkers built into word-processing programs, can do a reasonably thorough job of evaluating your catalog text for obvious errors, but many types of mistakes can slip past these evaluation functions.

For example, a spell checker will identify the typographical error "teh" as a mistyped form of "the," but the checking function won't flag "form" when it should be "from." Additionally, many word-processing grammar checkers flag stretches of text and claim they contain errors that don't actually exist.

The integrity of your project is too important to entrust to a software algorithm that can't identify every possible problem. At the same time, if you proofread your own work, you're likely to see the wording you expect rather than what really exists on the page.

For the best results, print out your project and give a copy to several people you trust to read it closely.

Ask these associates to mark everything they question, whether their concern involves spelling, grammar, flow, meaning, or clarity. Once they complete their reviews, look through their comments and use them to make any changes that appear necessary.

IMAGES

Like text, images deserve a closer look before you declare them finished and final. Especially if your product line involves many parts that look superficially similar, verify that you haven't accidentally implemented a photo of product A along with the write-up about product B.

Note on prodalist: easy modification in THE key of prodalist, even on a catalog-wide parameter or change. The *variables* feature increase even more the update possibilities -change the title or the company or the year in ONE place and it will be updated everywhere-. So do not hesitate to make these corrections, changes & improvements for the best final selling material, they are easier to do here than in any other edition software (before final printing of course).

Before you sign off on a catalog project, read through it onscreen to check for missing or duplicated products, lingering placeholder text you didn't replace with final content, unexpected use of accent colors, the presence of type styles that reflect earlier designs, and a page total that doesn't comply with the expected page count.

> Tip: Always include at least one other person in the proofreading process, especially if you are proofreading a catalog that you wrote and/or designed. If your project involves multiple languages, include a native speaker of each in your proofreading cycle.

12. INCORPORATING RESPONSE METHODS

Press printed or digital only, your catalog can incorporate a variety of response methods and mechanisms to encourage customers to engage with your company, place orders, and request further information that you can use to solidify a buying relationship. How you use these methods, and which ones you select, depend on a variety of considerations that relate to the types of information you want to acquire.

CLICKABLE LINKS

In a digital catalog, or a digital version of a press printed project, clickable links can direct the reader to your website for more information, special sales pricing, registration forms, and a wide range of methods through which you can further your goal of converting prospects to purchasers.

The security consideration involved in using these otherwise straightforward response methods lies in consumers' heightened and reasonable concerns about clickjacking, phishing, malware, and other disasters that can befall their computers, their privacy, and their personal information. To provide catalog readers with a sense of security about these links, you can accompany the clickable variants with selectable text that they can copy to their computer clipboards and paste into a web browser.

Links also can trigger the recipient's e-mail software to create and address a message for the recipient to send. Again, these automated digital reply methods raise security concerns. Because the customer can see the address to which the message would be directed, however, and can verify that it legitimately correlates with your business, this type of link may succeed in prompting at least some responses.
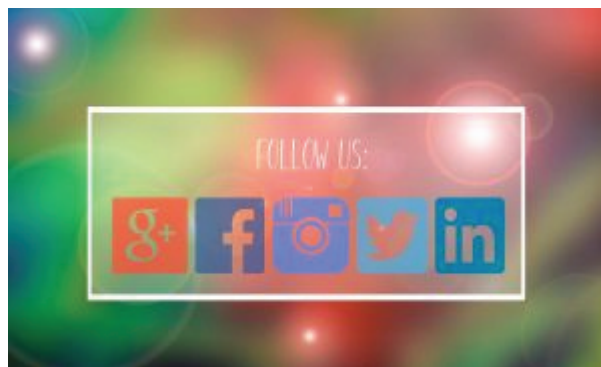
QR CODES

Once scanned with a mobile device, these patterns of geometric shapes behave like specialized forms of bar codes that redirect the device to a specific web page. You can incorporate QR codes in digital or in printed catalogs, using them to direct consumers to your website for additional information or specialized content. Like clickable links, QR codes can raise security concerns about where they actually lead and what if any risks those des-

tinations entail. Including a verbal description of where a QR code leads may help to allay concerns.

> **Note on prodalist:** QR codes so as more than 12 other barcode types are automatic … just place them & set the size and the required coding.
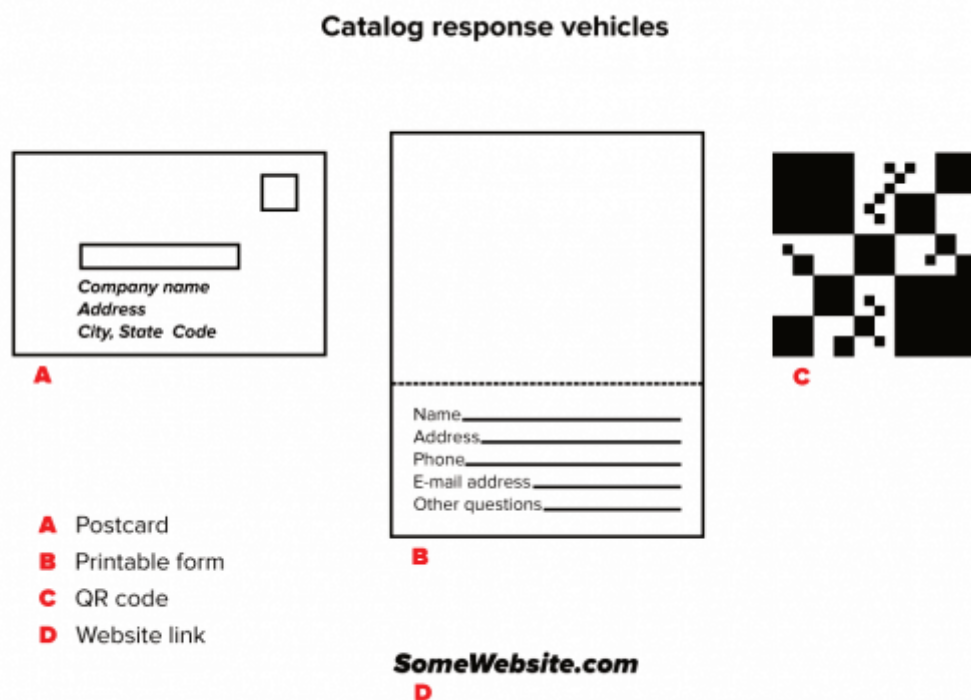
RESPONSE CARDS

Printed catalogs can include postcards for customers to fill out and return. Some of these cards include postal-reply encoding that bills the mailing cost to the entity that created the card rather than to the sender. Others include a labeled space to which the sender affixes postage.

Create reply cards with a thoughtful eye to the types of information you request from the consumer. Because anyone who handles these cards can see the information written on them, they should not be used to solicit credit or debit card numbers and other financially sensitive personally identifiable information.

If you mail out a printed catalog in an envelope, you can include another envelope for the recipient's use in returning a reply card within its shielding confines.

Reply cards can be inserted between catalog pages or created as part of an outside back cover, with perforations for use in detaching the card from the rest of the cover. Because most catalogs use heavier paper stock for covers than for text pages, the resulting card should be sturdy enough to transmit through the mail without placing it in an envelope.

Catalog response vehicles

Company name
Address
City, State Code

A

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail address
Other questions

B

C

SomeWebsite.com

D

A Postcard
B Printable form
C QR code
D Website link

In a digital catalog, you can create a response mechanism that the recipient must print out in order to fill it in and return it. This removes the cost of preparing the card, but the process involved in printing and mailing the reply vehicle may require more interest and time than the consumer cares to invest in the process.

> Tip: Never force customers to use only one response method to receive information from you. When you give them options they feel comfortable using, you increase their perception of your focus on their needs. A customer-centered attitude helps attract and retain business.

GLOSSARY

Ascender: The portion of a typeset character that extends above the x height, which is defined as the area occupied by lower-case characters that contain neither *ascenders* nor *descenders*. In most cases, the lower-case letters "b," "d," "f," "h," "k," and "t" include ascenders. See also *Descender*

Bleed: To print an image or area of color that extends all the way to the cut edge of a catalog page, the photo or color must extend at least 0.125″ beyond the cut edge. This additional area is called the bleed.

CMYK: Cyan, magenta, yellow, and black, the four primary inks that combine to create process-color printed output, including color photographs, backgrounds, and text.

Crop marks: Short, thin vertical and horizontal lines placed just outside the live area of a catalog page, indicated where the page will be cut out of a press sheet after it leaves the printing press.

Descender: The portion of a typeset character that extends below the baseline. In most cases, the lower-case letters "g," "j," "p," "q," and "y" all contain *descenders*. See also *Ascender*

Guillotine: An industrial cutter armed with a very sharp motor-driven blade, used to cut pages out of large stacks of paper.

Gutter: A narrow margin that separates columns of text or other printed material. Also used to refer to the inside page margin between printed material and the document's bound edge.

Kerning: A process that adjusts the amount of space between adjacent characters in typeset text. See also Tracking

Leading: The vertical distance between two consecutive lines of type. Measured from one baseline (the horizontal plane formed by the bottoms of letters that do not contain *descenders*) to the next. See also Descender

Margins: Areas around the outer edges of pages that either contain no printed content or contain no text.

Master page: A document element that contains placeholders representing the size and position of text areas, graphic elements, and other page content. Using master pages enables a designer to standardize general rules for what goes where in a catalog design.

Overset: A condition in which a text box or frame contains more text than the dimensions of

the box can display. Most page-layout applications show a small marker at the bottom right corner of any text box that contains overset text. To cure an overset, a designer must enlarge the box, reduce the type size, edit the text to shorten it, or add a box on another page and link the text there to allow it to continue.

Point size: A measurement of the size of type. One inch equals 72 points.

Press sheet: An oversized piece of paper on which a printing press creates multiple pages of a catalog or other document.

Process color: A type of commercial printing that uses *CMYK* inks to produce color output. See also *CMYK*

Resolution: The number of pixels (picture elements) in a square-inch or square-centimeter area of a digital photograph or other bitmapped image. These graphic files are made up of tiny areas of color like a mosaic of individual square tiles. Viewing a digital image at high magnification makes the individual pixels visible to the naked eye.

Reverse type: Light-colored type placed on top of a dark background.

RGB: Red, green, and blue, the three color channels contained in digital photographs in their native color space. *RGB* photos must be converted to *CMYK* in an image-editing application so they can be printed properly on a process-color press.

Sans serif: A style of typeface that lacks decorative strokes at the ends of the lines that form its characters.

Serif: A decorative stroke incorporated at the end of a vertical or horizontal line that forms part of a character in a serif typeface.

Spot color: An ink premixed to a formula that produces a specific individual color, unlike process color, in which four primary inks combine to produce individual shades. Spot colors include shades from throughout the spectrum, as well as metallic inks that produce special effects.

Tracking: A process that adjusts the amount of space between all the characters in typeset text. Whereas *kerning* applies only to individual pairs of characters, tracking can adjust entire words, lines, sentences, paragraphs, or even pages of type. See also *Kerning*

Type size: A measurement in points that defines the height of a piece of type.